The History Center at Courthouse Square

The DOCKET

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Director's Comments

Dear Friends,

When I was a child, my paternal grandparents, my younger brother, and myself would take trips to the Cook power plant when we were in town. My grandmother wanted to attend the near monthly craft fairs they held - which meant my grandfather was stuck taking me and my brother on our 500th viewing of the plant's visitor tour. I has a secret fear of the animatronics and the interactives never worked, but there was something about repeatedly returning to the same place that made younger me happy.

And as I begin my tenure as the museum's new director, I want the History Center at Courthouse Square to be to residents and visitors of Berrien County that Cook power plant was to younger me - a place to return to time and time again.

Sans the creepy animatronics and having interactives that actually work.

Using the strategic plan as our guide, the board and staff of the BCHA look to grow the Courthouse Square into an experience where each visit yields a new discovery against a familiar backdrop. Whether its returning to see one of our many temporary exhibits, taking in the grounds as the seasons change, or exploring new topics through our many programs, we want each visitor to feel as if they are returning home.

Already the staff is planning for 2020 and beyond to help our visitors make new memories and share old ones. We are planning a new series of exhibits in the Sheriff's House, looking to grow our Thursday Nights at the Courthouse series, expand permanent exhibit offerings, and add new community-centered programs to our calendar.

I am excited to be part of the BCHA family and I can't wait to experience the Courthouse Square's exciting future with all of you.

Historically yours,

Rhiannon Cizon
Executive Director

Taking Flight: The Story of a St. Joseph Resident Tinkerer

In grade-school you undoubtedly became familiar with the names Wilbur and Orville

Wright, or the Wright Brothers: Pioneers of the Air. The two brothers are widely known to be the first to build and successfully fly an airplane. Or were they...?

In the mid to late 1800s, inventors were scrambling to create heavier-than-air crafts that would carry individuals through the air, as if on the wings of birds. They studied, they designed, and they experimented which resulted in gliding machines - or gliders. These were non-motorized and relied solely on the air as it pushed against the body of the machine similar to how a paper airplane flies across a room (for a much more scientific explanation you can visit How Stuff Works). Among all the inventors a handful stuck out and became true pioneers in the world of aviation: Jean Marie Le Bris, John J. Montgomery, Otto Lilienthal, Percy Pilcher, Octave Chanute, Orville and Wilbur Wright, and Augustus Moore Herring. Several worked together, sharing notes and exchanging ideas. And sometimes, relationships soured and inventors became working enemies claiming ownership to ideas that were previously shared between the two.

Augustus Moore Herring worked closely with Octave Chanute in the 1890s, designing and testing various aircraft models. Indeed, the two designed a biplane hang glider that the Wright brothers improved upon in later years. Herring made approximately 1,200 flights in the Chanute-Herring glider, which the late Thomas J. Millar, a Berrien County historian, claimed this made Herring "one of the foremost glider pilots in the world at the time."

Herring lived in St. Joseph, Michigan, and he began creating his own designs out of his workshop in the Truscott Boat Yard. The local papers (notably the Evening Press) ran reports of him experimenting in heavier-than-air flights so it came as no great shock then that on October 10, 1898, Herring claimed to have had success in flying a heavier-than-air machine that was controllable and powered by an air-pressured engine. The following day, October 11, 1898, Herring telegraphed Chanute and the respected Notre Dame math professor Albert Zahm to join him at Silver Beach Amusement Park in St. Joseph, Michigan to watch him fly. However, there was not enough wind and Herring was unable to pressurize the air bottles that comprised his engine.

Not to be deterred, Herring tried again on October 22, 1898, meeting with success with a flight of 73 feet in length. The Benton Harbor Evening News reported on the flight in the October 24 issue, "The results of today's experimnt is important in that it is probably the first time in the world's history that a true flying machine (a power-driven machine heavier than the air it displaces) has ever carried its operator in successful flight."

"Why then," you may be asking, "is Augustus Moore Herring not widely recognized as the first to fly an airplane?" While many of us in Michigan will gladly take this claim, especially those of us in Berrien County, there is much debate on the amount of control Herring actually had in piloting his model.

Herring's experimentation in flight abruptly ended when a fire burned down his workshop followed closely by the sudden death of his sponsor, Matthias C. Arnot. Out of money and out of steam, Herring was briefly hired by Chanute where he worked on the Katydid to fly for the Wright exhibition before returning to St. Joseph where he published a magazine about lightweight gasoline engines titled "Gas Power", and created over 200 gasoline-powered bicycles which he called Mobikes.

Eventually, Herring moved to the east coast, and perhaps spurred by the success of the Wright brothers, and undoubtedly due to his own persistent imagination, he returned to experimenting in the air. He formed a company with Glenn H. Curtiss with the sole purpose of manufacturing airplanes (preceding the Wright brothers by several months). And later with W. Starling Burgess, which was eventually franchised by the Wrights.

Whether or not this forever tinkerer was the first person to successfully fly an engine-powered heavier-than-air machine, one can be certain that Augustus Herring, a long -time resident of St. Joseph, made significant contributions to flight and we should be thankful and proud that he placed roots in our county, the Best County in the Best State of the Union.

** The photographs accompanying the above story are taken from the BCHA archives.*

Above: Copy photograph of Augustus Herring, a pioneer aviator who lived in St. Joseph, with hang glider, ca. 1900.

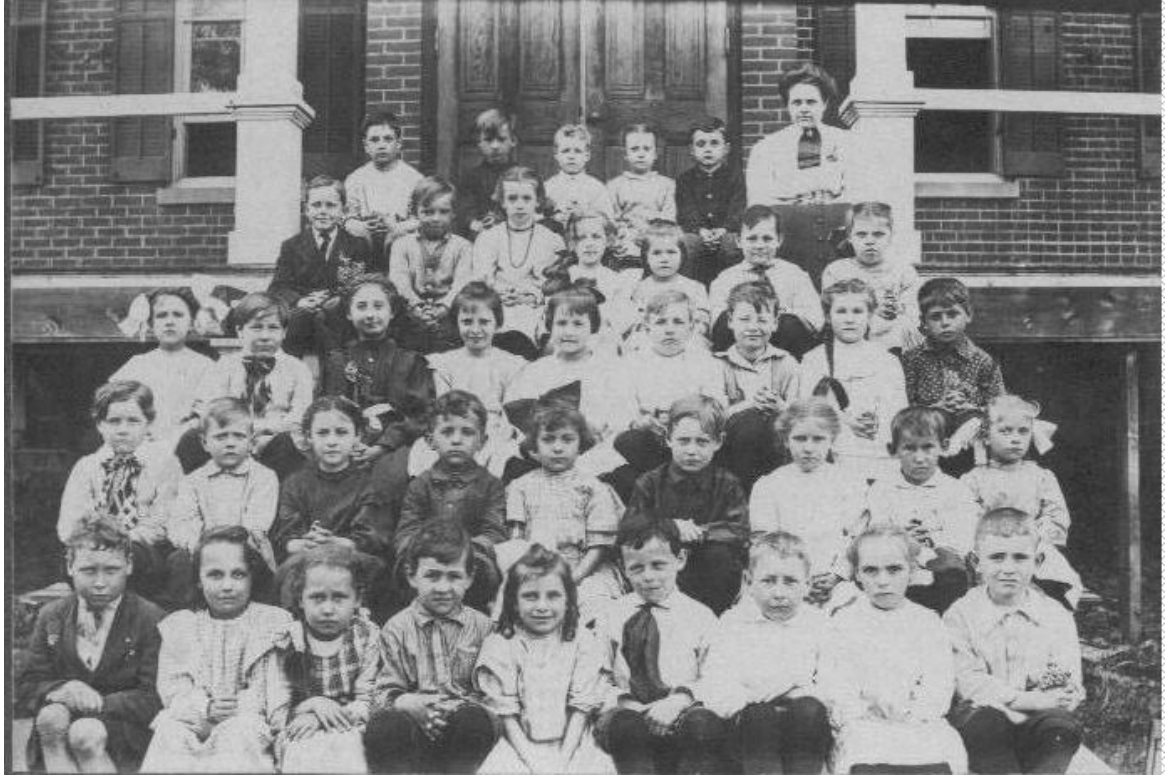
Left: Copy photograph of a portrait of Augustus Herring,

Below Left: Film negative of a house in St. Joseph identified as the "A. M. Herring Home," dated 23 April 1961. The 1900 census shows that the house was located at 413 Church Street; the site is now a parking lot.

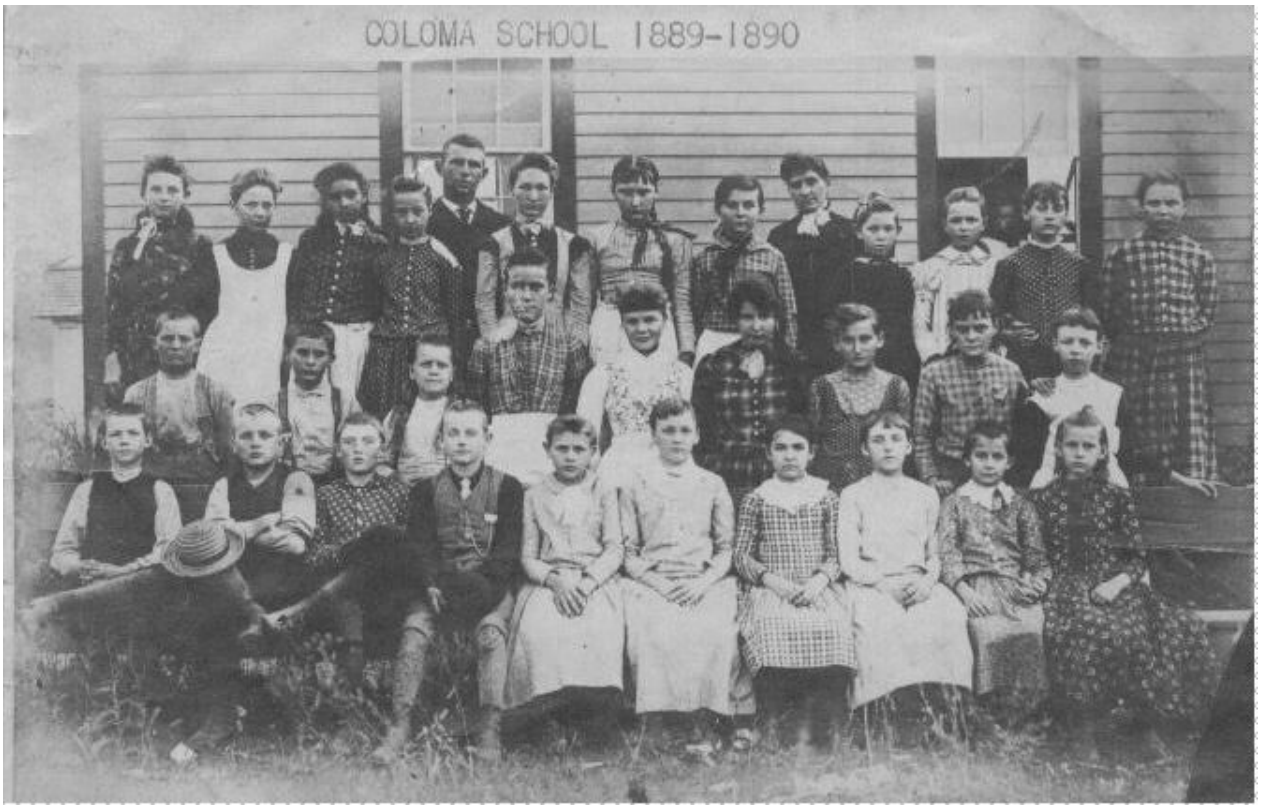
Below Right: Film negative of a wooden building identified as the workshop of Augustus Moore Herring in St. Joseph, dated 17 April 1961.

From the Collection: School Days Ahead

For students and teachers who live within the borders of Berrien County, the Berrien County Youth Fair signals the end of summer, meaning school is just around the corner. Let's take a look at some of the photographs displaying school groups of the past.



Photograph of schoolchildren and the teacher on the steps of a schoolhouse in Berrien Springs. This appears to be the house, converted to a school, that stood on the lot immediately to the north of the Berrien County courthouse.



Group photograph of Coloma school children, 1889-1890. Children are unidentified.

Photograph of school children in a classroom, ca. 1900. Probably the Berrien Springs Union School.

Photograph of school children on the steps of the Berrien Springs school, ca. 1910. The school was located on the corner of Madison and Cass streets in Berrien Springs. The photograph was originally owned by the donor's father, who is pictured on the extreme right of the front row. He identified the people as: front row, left to right: Harold Wilson, Ivan Farley, Vernon Hart, Leigh Latta, Arthur Robinson; second row, left to right: George Taylor, Nettie Dickinson, Helen Fisher Plantefaber, Mildred Snyder, Veda Davis, Marion Hankins

Porter, Pearl Ingleright Pennell, Leora Slater Dilley, Beth Taylor Emlong, Miss Frances Lockhart (teacher). Back row, left to right: Guy Heim, Harry Heim, Edmund Farley, Ruth Ingleright Spaulding, Luella Ferris, Irma Benhart, Lillian Huber, Harold Storick, Spencer Cuthbert, Glen Waldorf.

Copy photograph of schoolchildren at the Tryon School in Royalton Township, 1929. The school still stands on the corner of John Beers and Scottdale roads. Children are identified as, front row, left to right: Erma Duschek, Marion Radtke, Pearl Kugle, Alice Duschek, Robert Imler, Rudolph Duschek, Roscoe Imler, Vernon Kugle, Ardys Miller, Herbert Breen, Georgia Eisenhart, Shirley Wagner, Dorlesca Mahler. Second row: Lucille Wagner, Geraldine Geisler, Mildred Imler, Agnes Schadler, Margaret Imler, Elmer Schacks, William Johnson, David Kempf, Emilie Kempf, Edward Schadler, Kenneth Kretchman. In-between row: Jeanette Duschek, Violet Eisenhart, Ethel Kugle, Sophia Kempf. Third row: Mr. Eccles (teacher), Lester Bodtke, Frank Schadler, Gladwin Kugle, Clifford Kretchman, Victor Radtke, Ruby Kugle, Gertrude Schacks, Amelia Kempf.

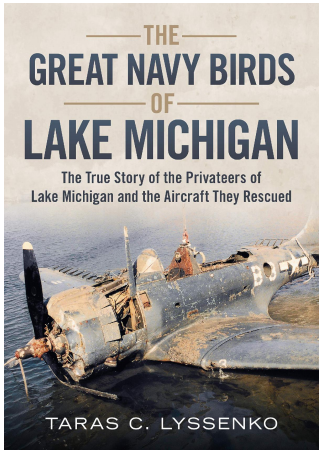
From BCHA Events: Sunday Programs, Thursdays at Courthouse Square, & more

Thank you to everyone who joined us for our events in August! It was such a busy month for us that we have no photos to share here, but know that many memories were made and we welcomed new friends and old at the Berrien County Youth Fair, at our Thursday Courthouse Series, and our Sunday events!

Wanted: Volunteers

We are blessed with wonderful volunteers who help with our booth at the Berrien County Youth Fair, Pioneer Days in May, an Old Fashioned Fourth of July Celebration, and more. We are always welcoming more! If you have a talent you would like to showcase during an educational event such as Pioneer Day, please let us know! Call 269-471-1202 or email tvelez@berrienhistory.org.

Mark Your Calendar: BCHA Events in September



The remains of a naval training program lie at the bottom of Lake Michigan. Now they are learning to fly again.

Now through October 9th - Berrien County Horse Shows
Local artist Vasilisa Kiselevich is displaying photos of area horse shows through the month of October. Guests will be able to explore the unique relationship between a rider and their horse.

September 1 through October 18, The BCHA Signature Event 2019 Tickets on Sale
The BCHA's signature event returns this October featuring Marcus Winchester as this year's guest presenter. The October 24th event will include dinner, auction items, and Winchester's talk on how the Potawatomi survived the 1830s Indian Removal Act. *$75.00 single ticket, $500 for a table of 8, both include a tax deductible donation.*

September 5, Meet & Greet with the New Director, 6:30 p.m.
The BCHA has hired a new director and the public is invited to meet her. Rhiannon Cizon will be available to meet with guests and her some of her ideas for the future of the History Center at Courthouse Square. *Free Admission*

September 8, *The Great Navy Birds of Lake Michigan*Talk & Book Signing with Taras Lyssenko; 2:30 p.m.
Taras Lyssenko returns to the BCHA to talk about his newest book. His company has spent decades retrieving naval planes from the bottom of Lake Michigan. He will explore this needed work and how we are able to reclaim history one plane at a time. Copies of the book will available in the gift shop during the event. *Free Admission.*

September 15, The Myths & Fables of the House of David Panel Talk, 2:30 p.m.
The tales told about the House of David are numerous, but what is true and what is myth? This unique panel discussion featuring

Ron Taylor, Debbie Boyersmith, and Brian Ziebart will wade through the legend to find the fact. *Free Admission*

Benjamin and Mary Purcell's House of David has intrigued Michigan and the country for decades.

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BCHA Mission Statement
The Mission of the BCHA is to collect, preserve and interpret the history of Berrien County through exhibits, tours, publications, and educational and community outreach programs for public benefit.